

## EARLY FRENCH STATISTICS

THE increasing extension of royal power is the only, the profound cause of the development of statistics in France from the fourteenth to the end of the sixteenth century. That extension manifests itself in two ways, by police measures and by fiscal measures; police measures and fiscal measures which are inspired by very different considerations but which are very often closely connected and the execution of which, in any case, cannot be conceived without numerical knowledge of the things and persons to which they apply.

*The First Applications of Economic Statistics*

The police measures arise from the economic policy of the monarchy. A policy of intervention and excessive regulation which equals, if it does not sometimes surpass, the regulation by which our contemporary socialists imagine social progress can be realized, and the chief end of which, loudly proclaimed, was the protection of consumers. It was a question of safeguarding their interests by rendering impossible their exploitation of the producers and especially by the tradesmen. The pretension was to keep the population not only from absolute lack of indispensable necessities, from famine, but from want and even simply from high prices. To this end it was necessary to be master of production, transportation and markets, it was necessary to render obligatory the conditions and forms of sale and to limit the price by establishing a maximum. Well, how could that be brought about without incessant enumerations to make known the quantities produced, the quantities brought to market and the quantities demanded?

The monarchy soon learned the advantage it could gain from the organization of the trades in corporations to extend first over Paris and its *vicomté*, then over the rest of France, the close-woven mail-shirt of its policy of intervention. That is why it applied itself so carefully to the work of organization. Its efforts were crowned with success from the beginning of the fourteenth century, and they resulted in transforming into an instrument of economic tyranny institutions which had, at first, protected the liberty of the workers.

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Macmillan, 1918, pp. 228-29.